

# CINCINNATI FIRE DEPARTMENT MEDIA RELEASE



## Office of the Fire Chief



### **Home Heating Fire Safety**

The Cincinnati Fire Department is encouraging the public to focus on fire safety when heating their homes during winter, which has finally arrived. Many Americans need to use extra care if they are relying on alternative heating sources to save money on heating bills.

The use of wood burning stoves is growing and space heaters are selling rapidly, or fireplaces are burning wood and man made logs.

Please keep in mind such heating methods are a major contributing factor in residential fires. "Proper installation, use and maintenance of winter heating devices are essential for reducing the risk of fire and carbon monoxide poisoning. Home heating fires in Ohio are often caused by human error, particularly through the misuse of portable heaters, wood stoves and fireplaces.

In Ohio during 2005, ten people died and 72 people were injured in 570 heating-related fires in homes. Many of these fires could have been prevented. You can prevent the loss of life and property resulting from heating fires by being able to identify potential hazards and follow the safety tips contained in the fact sheets below.

#### **Fireplaces and Wood Burning Stoves**

- Have a qualified professional check your home's heating system annually. Furnaces, fireplaces, wood stoves and their chimneys should be inspected and cleaned prior to the start of every heating season.
- Allow enough clearance between a wood burning stove and combustible materials such as walls, floors and ceilings.
- A wood stove should be placed on an approved stove board to protect your floor from heat and hot coals.
- Make sure the flue is open before lighting a fire, and never close the flue while a fire is still smoldering.
- Use a fireplace screen to prevent any sparks from reaching out and igniting nearby objects.
- Never use gasoline or lighter fluid to start a fire.
- The immediate area in front of a fireplace (approximately 3 ft.) should not have a rug, carpet or exposed wood flooring.
- When lighting a gas fireplace, strike your match first, then turn on the gas.
- Burn only dry, seasoned wood and dispose of the cooled ashes in a closed metal container outside and away from your home.
- Never leave a fire burning unattended in the fireplace.

#### **Portable Space Heaters**

- When buying a space heater, look for a control feature that automatically shuts off the power if

the heater falls over.

- Never leave a heater on when you are not in the room or when you go to sleep, and do not leave children or pets unattended around any heating source. Unplug it when you are not using it.
- Don't use an extension cord with an electric portable heater. The current from the heater could melt the cord and cause a fire.
- Don't plug more than one heating device into an outlet.
- Never use electric heaters near water - like in your bathroom or near a water heater.